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Protracted conflicts in the GUAM area and their implications for international peace, security and development

The situation in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan

Identical letters dated 4 April 2016 from the Permanent Representative of Azerbaijan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

Upon instructions from my Government, I have the honour to transmit herewith a statement dated 3 April 2016 issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan regarding the recent large-scale military provocations by the armed forces of Armenia on the occupied territories of the Republic of Azerbaijan (see annex).

In its latest provocation, Armenia deliberately both attacked the civilian population in a densely populated area in the territories adjacent to the front line and opened intensive heavy weapons fire at the positions of Azerbaijan's armed forces. Moreover, Armenia has deployed additional missile and artillery units in the occupied territories of the Republic of Azerbaijan. In addition, Armenia has conducted intensive military helicopter shuttle flights between its own territory and the occupied territories of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

The continuous occupation of a large part of the territory of the Republic of Azerbaijan by the armed forces of Armenia remains the main obstacle in the settlement of the conflict and the only source of the escalation of the situation on the front line and the occurrence of hostilities and casualties.

The international community, in particular the United Nations, should demand that Armenia, in accordance with Security Council resolutions 822 (1993), 853 (1993), 874 (1993) and 884 (1993), withdraw immediately, completely and unconditionally all its occupying forces from all occupied territories of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

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I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda items 35 and 40, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Yashar **Aliyev**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

Annex to the identical letters dated 4 April 2016 from the Permanent Representative of Azerbaijan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

Statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan

On 2 April 2016, Armenia, targeting civilians in a densely populated area in the territories adjacent to the front line, opened intensive heavy weapons fire at the positions of Azerbaijan's armed forces along the line of contact. As a result of the artillery attacks of Armenian armed forces, a number of civilians were killed or seriously wounded. Substantial damages were also inflicted upon the private and public properties.

The armed forces of Azerbaijan have taken the necessary countermeasures within its internationally recognized borders to ensure the safety of the civilian population, to stop the provocations of Armenia and to deter it from further acts of aggression. Currently, the situation remains tense. Shelling of Azerbaijan's positions along the line of contact with heavy weapons, including with artillery, continues.

Armenia, in an attempt to reinforce its heavy artillery in the occupied territories, has deployed additional rocket and artillery forces and its military helicopters have conducted intensive shuttle flights between the occupied territories and Armenia.

Over the past years, such violations and armed provocations of Armenia as attacking and killing Azerbaijani military personnel as well as civilians with the use of mortars and large-calibre machine guns and artillery, have become more frequent and violent.

Armenia's desperate attempts to blame Azerbaijan for the escalation of the situation on the front line are aimed at misleading its own people and the wider international community.

Azerbaijan has repeatedly brought to the attention of the international community that the illegal presence of Armenian armed forces in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan remains the main cause for the escalation of the situation and continues to pose a threat to peace and stability in the region. Armenia, through consistent provocations and escalation of the situation, the strengthening of its military build-up in the occupied territories, illegally changing the demographic, cultural and physical character of the seized lands and engaging in unlawful economic and other activities, including the transfer of Armenian populations into these territories, is pursuing an apparent goal of the annexation of Azerbaijan's territories and the consolidation of the status quo, which is unacceptable and unsustainable, as also stated by the Heads of State of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group Co-Chairs. It is Armenia that also blocks all initiatives of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs, including the recent proposals of the Russian Minister for Foreign Affairs, Sergey Lavrov, to derail the negotiation process. It once again proves that the Yerevan officials are not genuinely interested in seeking a political settlement of the armed conflict.

The fundamental basis for the settlement of the conflict is set out in Security Council resolutions 822 (1993), 853 (1993), 874 (1993) and 884 (1993) and General Assembly resolution 62/243, which condemn the use of force against Azerbaijan and the occupation of its territories and reaffirm the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Azerbaijan and the inviolability of its internationally recognized borders. In those resolutions, the United Nations reaffirmed that the Nagorno-Karabakh region is an inalienable part of Azerbaijan and demanded the immediate, complete and unconditional withdrawal of the occupying forces from all occupied territories of Azerbaijan.

The military occupation of the territory of Azerbaijan does not represent a solution and will never produce a political outcome desired by Armenia. The sooner Armenia reconciles with this reality, the sooner the conflict will be resolved and the countries and peoples in the region will benefit from the prospects of cooperation and economic development.

Azerbaijan calls upon the international community to demand that Armenia cease the illegal occupation of Azerbaijan's territories, withdraw its troops from all seized lands and engage constructively in the conflict settlement process in accordance with the requirements of the relevant resolutions of the Security Council and the norms and principles of international law.